

When search dogs can be helpful.....

- An overdue hiker or hunter in a wilderness area.
- An Alzheimer's patient who has walked away from his care facility.
- A missing child.
- A drowning victim in a lake.
- An area where there may be human remains buried.
- A victim buried in an avalanche or bluff collapse.
- A missing person where suicide is suspected.
- Persons suspected of being in a collapsed structure.
- To confirm that an article was worn by a subject.
- To confirm that a subject was in a particular vehicle.
- To locate human remains after a fire.



HOW YOU CAN HELP PRIOR TO ARRIVAL OF DOG TEAMS

Protect scent guides: One of the most important things that you can do to assist the dog teams is to protect any of the missing person's items that may be used for scent guides. Possible scent guides include articles of clothing, the subject's car seat, or the subject's sleeping bag. Appropriate scent guides are those which *only* the subject has come in contact with. All Southwest Search Dog handlers are trained to properly obtain and preserve scent guides and will usually do so immediately upon arriving on scene. *We do not ask for you to obtain and preserve the scent guide, but instead to protect the scent guide from contamination until a Southwest Search Dog handler can properly preserve it.* If you are unsure of the adequacy of an article, please protect it and let the dog handler decide if it can be used.

Provide shaded parking in hot temperatures: When possible, we ask that shaded parking be made available for search dog team vehicles. When not in the field, dogs usually rest in their vehicles and are sensitive to hot temperatures.

Provide a briefing and a map: Teams should be briefed on the circumstances and operations of the search and provided with a map. Teams should be notified of area hazards and special protocols, including radio codes, that your agency has. In addition, it is helpful to have personnel who are familiar with the area assigned to the dog teams. If needed, it is possible to get Southwest Search Dog assistants. These are members certified to go on searches to assist other dog teams.

WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN TEAMS ARRIVE

Southwest Search Dog teams arrive fully equipped with specialized equipment for search, communications, survival, and first aid, and are self-contained for three days. In hot temperatures expect search dog teams to search best in the early morning hours and at night when scent conditions are optimal.



Phone: 888-333-8899 24 hours
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PROVIDING EXPERIENCED SEARCH DOG TEAMS TO LAW ENFORCEMENT

Southwest Search Dogs



(888) 333-8899
24 hours

SOUTHWEST
SEARCH DOGS

Southwest Search Dogs

Southwest Search Dogs is a group of volunteers with specially trained dogs dedicated to assisting in the search for missing persons. Southwest Search Dog teams are available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to respond to local, state, and federal law enforcement as well as other public service agency requests.

In total, Southwest Search Dog handlers have participated in over 1,000 searches in the past two decades, providing a special resource while saving agencies thousands of dollars through the use of volunteers. Southwest

Search Dog members incur all costs including mileage, equipment, and dog expenses. *Requesting agencies receive all services at no charge.*



Southwest Search Dog teams are NIMS compliant and certified to FEMA and California state OES typing.

WHAT SOUTHWEST SEARCH DOG TEAMS CAN DO

All handlers initially train a dog in one of two disciplines - *trailing* or *area*.

Trailing dogs are trained to follow the path that a lost person has taken. Similar to traditional "tracking" dogs, these dogs require a properly preserved scent guide and are not distracted by other people in the area. These dogs usually work on long leashes. Trailing dogs frequently work trails that are several hours old and, depending on weather and other conditions, can sometimes follow people who have been missing for days.

Area search dogs are trained to find any human scent in an area. Area search dogs most frequently work off-leash and can cover large areas. They are particularly useful in efficiently clearing possible victim locations.

Search dogs can be helpful in a variety of situations such as wilderness as well as urban settings. Many of our dog teams are also certified for:

- Cadaver
- Basic Disaster
- Water Cadaver (drownings)
- Evidence

HANDLER TRAINING

Southwest Search Dog handlers represent a variety of backgrounds such as full-time or retired peace officers, medical and other professionals, and experts in other fields. All of the handlers have in common dedication to helping people and expertise in the use of search dogs.

Dog handlers are continually updating their skills and knowledge and most participate in 50 to 100 hours or more of training and mission per month. The minimum training requirements for all handlers include:

- First aid
- CPR
- Map and compass navigation
- GPS use
- Survival
- Radio communications
- Helicopter operations
- Mantracking
- Crime scene preservation

Most handlers have additional training in areas such as technical rescue, amateur radio, and canine first aid.

DOG TRAINING

Southwest Search Dogs are well socialized animals and are very different from most patrol canines. Our dogs represent a wide variety of breeds and are evaluated for good temperament. Southwest Search Dogs are exposed to a many conditions and are expected to function in a wide variety of environments. Minimum dog training requirements include socialization, obedience, helicopter orientation, and search work. As a team, the dog and handler must pass a series of search tests to become field qualified. On average, this process takes one-and-a-half to two years. Teams must participate in on-going training throughout the year as well as recertification tests.



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S E A R C H D O G S

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